MONTANA STATE LIBRARY
COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY GUIDELINES

Collection management policies, considered and formally adopted by governing entities, are a prerequisite to maintaining a useful materials collection. In addition, the Public Library Standards for Montana require all public libraries to have current and board approved collection management policies in order to qualify for state funding (see Section 10.102.1150H, #1a). The Montana State Library Commission also requires that any library applying for grant funds must have a current and board/administration approved collection management policy on file at Montana State Library. In order for a policy to be current, it must be reviewed, updated and approved by the library's governing entity at least every three years.

The Montana State Library has resources available to help libraries with collection development issues and writing and revising collection management policies:

> An online resource – CE Central -- that lists classes and webinars and Learning Library with collection management resources

> Library Development Division staff (call 1-800-338-5087) and a Professional Development resource collection. These resources can be located on the Montana Shared Catalog from the MSL web page.

> Sample policies for review: Clancy Public Library, Lewistown Public Library, Lolo K-8 School Library, and Hamilton High School Library. Montana State Library thanks these libraries for allowing us to post the policies for others to see.

> Each year the State Library Commission recognizes libraries of all types with the Collection Management Honor Roll. To be eligible for the Honor Roll, libraries are asked to send their collection management policy to Montana State Library for its library files.

A collection management policy should be written for the library staff, the library board/governing organization, and the patrons of the library. It should both guide the collection management activities and explain those activities and results. The collection management policy should not be static, but should frequently be reviewed and changed to reflect changes in the library's goals and in the collection itself. The library's collection management policy is a public policy and should be available to the community. Posting public policies on the library's website is recommended.

Below are suggested guidelines for a collection management policy. The policy should describe how the library collection serves its users, how the collection is

developed, and an evaluation of the collection and priorities for improving it. The length of the policy varies with the complexity of the collection and of the community of users it serves. Each topic in the guidelines below is important and should be addressed, at least to the extent appropriate for your library. The questions and statements are for your guidance in considering the library's situation and in writing a policy that will be useful.

A. HOW THE COLLECTION SERVES USERS
<u>Introducing the policy</u>
Why does the library have a collection management policy? Why is it needed? Who it is for? How is it used? Reference to the library's mission statement might be useful.

<u>Library community and users</u>
The library needs to know who it is being asked to serve. Information that helps to guide collection management might include size, population, location, economic base, etc. of the community (town, county, school, business, etc.). Also, the age, education level, occupation, number, frequency of use, reasons for use, etc. of the primary, secondary and occasional users of the library. It is also important to identify who is not being served and why. Resources for community and user information are state census data, city and county economic statistics, OPI data on school districts, etc.

<u>Needs of the community</u>
What educational, recreational, and/or research needs must the collection meet? Consider the needs of children, students, senior citizens, teachers, government officials, special needs patrons, business owners, and other segments of the population. Attention should also be given to the information needs of people who do not use the library. Surveys, focus groups, and suggestion boxes can be used to find out the community's needs.

<u>How does the library meet these needs?</u>
What is the focus of the collection? Recreational reading? Current information? Research? What reading or information levels are collected: preschool, school, adult, technical, professional, etc.? What services does the library offer to meet community's needs: homebound services; deposit collections at nursing homes, classrooms, correctional facilities; etc. Does the library offer interlibrary loan service to obtain materials not in the collection? What needs are not currently being met by the collection? What formats or subject areas can you collect to meet the needs of non-users?

<u>Cooperative collection arrangements</u>
What cooperative agreements, if any, are in place? Are you part of a sharing group? Do you cooperate with other libraries to purchase electronic resources? Is the library a member of a consortium such as the Montana Shared Catalog? Partners?

B. HOW THE COLLECTION IS DEVELOPED

<u>General description of the collection</u>
A general description of the library's collection is needed in the policy. What is the size of the collection? How much does it grow each year? What is the overall age of the collection? Do you have mostly current information? Are older publications kept for historical or research purposes?

<u>Collection responsibilities and selection procedures</u>
Who selects materials? What general processes or procedures are involved? What criteria are used for selection? This section should make it clear to the community why something is or is not in the collection. Many libraries adopt [ALA's The Library Bill of Rights](#) and [Freedom to Read](#) statement which can be stated in this section of the collection management policy. The actual documents can be included in an appendix to the policy.
NOTE: The library's existing selection policy describing the procedures and policies for adding materials to the collection could be added to the collection management policy.

<u>Formats</u>
Describe which formats of information the library collects: books, periodicals, newspapers, DVDs, audio books, software, CDs, online databases, etc. Are paperbacks, textbooks, large print, or electronic formats purchased or collected? Under what circumstances and to what extent? Is there a need to collect in a format you don't yet have? Are there format types not collected? Why? Are there formats the library accepts as donations, but does not purchase?

<u>Multiple copies</u>
Does the library normally purchase multiple copies of books or other items? How is the determination made to purchase or place duplicates in the collection? Are multiple copies available for book clubs? Will you purchase another copy if an item has a certain number of holds?

<u>Languages</u>
Is material collected in languages other than English? Which languages? What materials? Examples:
> Maintain collection of adult and juvenile Spanish fiction.
> Collect classic French and German literature to support undergraduate courses.

<u>Special collections</u>
Does the library maintain any subject areas or format collections as a special collection? A local history or Montana collection? These may be materials that are shelved separately or that do not circulate (rare books on the history of skiing, local history collection, etc.). What are the criteria for adding materials to these collections?

<u>Funding for the collection</u>
How are funds for materials obtained and allocated? Are library materials purchased using taxpayer dollars, private donations, grants, trust funds, friends group contributions? Are funding formulas tied to school enrollment? How does the budget change from year to year?

<u>Collection maintenance</u>
Why, when and by what criteria do you withdraw items from the collection: outdated information, poor physical condition, unneeded duplicates, subject matter outside the scope of the collection management policy, not used in certain time period, etc.? What is the library's policy for rebinding, repair, replacement? How long are periodicals and newspapers kept in the collection? How are withdrawn materials handled: book sale, recycled, trashed, etc.?

<u>Patrons and collection development</u>
1. Requests
Does the library purchase materials requested by patrons? How is this done?

2. Gifts
Does the library accept gifts? What do you add to the collection? How do you dispose of unwanted gifts? Do you accept gifts with special restrictions? Do you accept monetary gifts or bequests? Who makes the decisions about gifts?
NOTE: Libraries should not appraise materials; receipts for donors should only be for the number of items donated and not for any monetary value.

3. Challenges
How does the library handle complaints about collection materials? If an individual or group asks that materials in the collection be removed for some reason or asks the library to add materials that do not meet the criteria stated in the policy, the library could face a materials challenge. The library needs a formal report form for filing challenges and a step-by-step procedure for handling these incidents. If the library has adopted The Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read statement (see above) this can be stated in this section of the collection management policy. The actual documents and the library's challenge forms should be included as addendum to the policy.

C. COLLECTION DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION
The library sets goals for the collection based on the needs of the community it serves and the budget available to use for those needs. This section of the policy is designed to describe the current state of the collection, both strengths and weaknesses, and to set priorities for how collection goals can be addressed and achieved. When the policy is reviewed and updated, it allows library administrators to determine what progress has been made and what remains to be done.

For information about ways to describe and evaluate the collection, please see the appendix at the end of these guidelines.

D. IMPLEMENTING AND UPDATING THE POLICY

1. <u>Revision</u>: How, when and by whom will the policy be reviewed and updated? The policy needs to be specific about the revision plans. Examples:

> Every June by the librarian and trustees.
> Every two years, beginning in (specific year or month/year), by the library-faculty committee.

NOTE: Montana State Library requires that collection management policies be reviewed and updated, with the current board chair/legal authority's and director/librarian's signatures, at least every three years. Please submit the new policy in its entirety to the State Library for its library files (required to be eligible for the Collection Management Honor Roll).

2. <u>Implementation</u>: The policy needs to be officially adopted by the library's governing authority and this action should be recorded in the minutes of an official meeting. The record of action should be included at the end of the policy with signatures and dates of the appropriate individuals. Examples:

a. for a public library

_____

Librarian   Date

_____

Chair, Board of Trustees   Date

b. for a school library

_____

Librarian   Date

_____

Administrator   Date

_____

Chair, Board of Education   Date

APPENDIX
HOW TO DESCRIBE & EVALUTE THE COLLECTION

Describing the collection is helpful for identifying what needs to be improved or weeded, as well as what parts of the collection are in good shape. Libraries have limited resources, so it's good to use money wisely when investing in the collection.

There are different tools to describe the collection – by broad subject or classification system, using collection levels or the conspectus method. Information about these descriptive tools is given below and demonstrates how it is possible to make staff, funders, and patrons aware of what the library collection actually offers. However, describing the collection isn't enough. In order to improve the collection so that it serves the community better, it is also necessary to know where the strengths and weaknesses are found. Evaluation of the collection is a crucial part of the policy.

The steps listed below can be used for describing and evaluating the collection as well as setting collection priorities.

1. **Subjects**
To analyze the collection, start with subject areas. The details in this section of the policy will depend on the size and needs of the library. Three common approaches to describing subject areas are mentioned below. Choose or adapt the one most relevant to your library. Be as general or as specific as needed to have useful information for development of the collection.

a. Broad categories:
        History
        Science & Technology
        Social Sciences
        Literature
       General Reference
        Religion
        Curriculum areas

b. Broad classification number categories:
        Dewey Decimal Classification
                000's
                100's
                200's
                300's
        Library of Congress Classification
                A's
                B's
                C's

c. <u>Specific classification number categories</u>:
        Dewey Decimal Classification
                900-909 History
                910, 914-919 Travel
                910-912, 914-919 Geography
                913 Archaeology

        Library of Congress Classification
                E51-99 Indians of North America
                E101-135 Discovery & exploration of America
                E186-199 Colonial history
                E201-298 Revolution

2. **Present Collection Levels**

For each of the subject areas give a brief description in the policy of how much the library collects in that area. Include all formats (books, periodicals, audiovisual, government publications, online resources, etc.) in your description and an assessment of each subject area. Three possible ways to describe collection levels are given below:

a. At the minimum, give some indication of the strengths and weaknesses of your collection in each subject area. Examples:
      The library does not collect in this area.
      Have current reference sources, 10-15 circulating books, but all are more than 25 years old.

b. You may combine brief descriptions with standard collection level descriptions:
      <u>Out of scope</u>: the library does not collect in this subject.

      <u>Minimal level</u>: have a few good items.

      <u>Basic level</u>: have an up-to-date collection that will introduce readers to the subject and indicate the varieties of information available elsewhere.

      <u>Study level</u>: have a collection adequate to support undergraduate instruction & sustained independent study. Includes material at all appropriate reading levels.

      <u>Research level</u>: includes all the major published source material required for dissertation research.

c. If your library has used a conspectus methodology to assess the collection, you may choose to use the following collection depth indicator codes/levels:
      <u>0</u> = Out of scope; library does not collect in this subject.

1 = Minimal information level: very limited collection of general resources. This code includes uneven and focused coverage of a subject.

2 = Basic Information level: collection supports the needs of general library users through first two years of college. This code can be further defined by introductory or advanced level.

3 = Study or instructional support level: collection provides information in a systematic way and supports the needs of general library users through college. This code can be further defined by basic, intermediate, or advanced level.

4 = Research level: collection contains the major published source materials required for graduate study and independent research.

5 = Comprehensive level: collection goal is to be exhaustive as far as is reasonably possible.

3. **Other Considerations**

For each subject area the policy can also provide a little more information about the collection. Take into consideration:

Age
- is the information current or out-of-date with limited value
- is the topic unchanging so having older materials is acceptable

Condition
- are the materials dirty, unappealing, cramped, hard to browse

Use
- a popular, heavily used section might need more materials
- a section that is used less could be weeded

Need
- has the need for a topic changed?
- was this a hot topic once, but interest moved to another section of the collection

What's missing
- newer information, more resources, different formats
- different location
- section was weeded and now needs more content

4. **Evaluation**

Once the collection description is done, take a closer look at the needs identified earlier in the policy. Using your knowledge of the library's users and the community's information needs, determine for each subject area how well the collection meets the identified needs.

If the evaluation indicates that parts of the collection would benefit from a thorough weeding, a good resource is *The CREW Method: Expanded Guidelines for Collection Evaluation and Weeding for Small and Medium-Sized Public Libraries*, Texas State Library.

Priorities and Goals
The next step is to set priorities for what can be done in the next three years to make the collection better. From the section descriptions and evaluations presented above, determine which areas are the most important to change or improve -- by adding materials or weeding -- and set those as the priority. Having priorities gives direction to library staff, assists library leaders with assigning resources and marking achievement, and provides a want list that can be shared with potential donors. If someone asks what the library collection needs, this section of the policy will make it clear what needs to be done and in what order. Examples:

> Weed science & technology collection by _____ (date).
> Upgrade medical section from minimal to basic level by _____ (date).
> Work toward study level for local history collection.
> Priorities are local history, current fiction, and business (adult collection) and support for summer reading program (children's collection.)